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# Administration soft-pedals communist drug connections

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Reagan administration officials backed away yesterday from charges that communist nations are conspiring to undermine Western countries through trade in drugs.

"Narcotics trafficking... is dominated by narcotics traffickers who are governed only by their greed and whose only ideology... is the pursuit of profit," Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Clyde D. Taylor told a joint hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations and Judiciary committees on so-called "narco-terrorism."

"Most of these groups cannot be called terrorists, or even political insurgents," he said. "Nor do we have evidence of a communist conspiracy to use drugs to undermine Western democracies, or our own society in particular."

But Mr. Taylor said "money from drug smuggling supports terrorists" and "terrorists provide assistance to drug traffickers."

Mr. Taylor's disavowal of proof of a communist conspiracy appeared to conflict with charges made moments before in the same hearing by Sen. Alfonse M. D'Amato, R-N.Y., that traffic in drugs by a Bulgarian state enterprise, KINTEX, is part of a "Warsaw pact conspiracy to undermine Western democracies."

And Yonah Alexander, a fellow in terrorism studies at Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies, said "drug-trafficking is an important element of low-intensity conflict" between East and West today. He accused the Soviet Union of planning "in a very confident way to prepare the infrastructure for these activities over a very long period" of time.

Sen. Paula Hawkins, R-Fla., also charged that evidence is "now emerging of government-sponsored narco-terrorism through the use of government personnel and government facilities, including military bases, territorial waters and air space to aid in drug smuggling."

Mr. Taylor and David L. Westrate, deputy assistant administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration, took a more cautious view of foreign government involvement in narcotics traffic, but agreed that terrorists are trading increasingly in drugs to raise money for weapons and supplies.

"Both the terrorists and the traffickers have immeasurably increased the level of anarchy and lethality through the acquisition of automatic weapons... and other high firepower armaments," Mr. Westrate said.

The two officials said that three countries — Bulgaria, Nicaragua, and Cuba — are at least permitting movement of drugs through their territory.

Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr., D-Del., pressed the two men to come up with specific evidence that the three governments are "initiating or augmenting" drug trafficking.

Mr. Westrate said he couldn't disclose some of the evidence in a public forum and also indicated that the case against the countries is largely circumstantial.

"Anyone's conclusion has got to be based on circumstantial evidence," he said. "We do not have a tape recording so to speak. But we do have substantial sources of information... [that] indicate the governments at a minimum condone this activity."

Although senators from both

sides of the aisle repeatedly assured each other that they were in favor of "bipartisan" attacks on terrorism and drug trafficking, a number of partisan blows were landed.

For example, when Mr. Taylor said the traditional definition of terrorism includes "terrorism that has a political agenda, that is tied in with insurgencies," Sen. Claiborne Pell, D-R.I., observed that "the activities of the Contras would fall into that definition."

At one point in the dialogue, it appeared from the literal words exchanged that Mr. Taylor could have been agreeing with Sen. Pell that the Nicaraguan resistance groups could be classified as "terrorists." But Mr. Taylor explained later that he was not agreeing with Sen. Pell.

The joint hearing — the second of three on the subject of terrorism scheduled by the two committees — also featured an intramural conflict.

Responding to charges by Sen. Jeremiah Denton, R-Ala., that the news media hasn't adequately reported the seriousness of "narco-terrorism," Sen. D'Amato said the real failure was in the Reagan administration's anti-drug efforts, calling them an "absolute scandal."

"The administration has been totally inept," he charged, in getting across to the country the seriousness of the problem.

He praised Mrs. Reagan's public efforts in opposition to drugs, but said, "I don't see anybody else doing anything."

Sen. D'Amato's attack appeared to surprise Sen. Denton, who defended the administration's efforts and repeated his charges that the news media are muffling the administration's voice on the issue.